

Caregivers recognized

Family caregivers honored nationally.

Hawai'i's population is growing older at rates above the national average. Across the United States nearly one out of every four households (23 percent or 22.4 million households) is involved in caregiving to persons aged 50 or over. By the year 2007 that number could reach 39 million nationally. In Hawai'i it is estimated that more than 114,000 persons are providing care for their loved ones and friends.

Prolonged care giving

can take a toll on the physical and psychological health of the caregiver. Family members provide more than 80 percent of all long-term care services, and in many cases, their first line of contact with professionals is the family physician. Primary care physicians can play a key role in safeguarding the health of the family and making referrals for assistance for care giving families. "Making the Link" program administered by the Honolulu Elderly Affairs

Division aims to increase physician awareness of the needs of family caregivers to help the medical community link caregivers with supportive services.

Family caregiving has far reaching economic consequences that business leaders can no longer afford to ignore. Managing the responsibilities of home and eldercare isn't easy for workers. One survey revealed how the stresses of family caregiving affected employee productivity:

- 49% went in late, left early, or took time off during work;
- 11% took a leave of

absence;

- 10% quit their jobs entirely;
- 7% worked fewer hours, or took a less demanding job;
- 4% lost job benefits;
- 4% chose early retirement; and
- 3% turned down a promotion.

To get more information on family caregiver services, call the Maui County Office on Aging 270-7755 or visit the Family Caregiver Alliance web site at www.caregiver.org. (Hawai'i State Department of Health) ★